



## 2013-2014 AESN Case Study

**School:** David Hoy Elementary    **District:** SD91 Nechako Lakes

**Area of focus:** Student Level

**Inquiry Team Members:** Eileen Bennison, Marilyn Gammon, Lynn George

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**Question / focus area:** Will inquiry learning help with reading and writing and engage all our learners more? We focused on creating knowledge, telling stories, team teaching, and including the Carrier language in all spaces.

**Scanning:** Sometimes the background knowledge we would like students to have is missing, but everyone does have a story and a connection. It is important to provide an appropriate time and place to share stories, and to scaffold this into our academic curriculum. We really worked hard to meet the students where they were at, to celebrate gains, and to focus less on their academic struggles.

**Focus:** We selected *water* for our topic as we had noticed that many of last year's stories were about water, salmon, camping, and the lake that we live on. We used it to teach the Carrier language, to conduct research reports, to teach reading, and to teach Social Studies.

**Hunch:** This is the third year we have participated in this inquiry, and we are pleased to say that while we still see the need to create an inclusive classroom each year and the need to strive for academic success, we have learned to look for progress through formative assessment and to meet students where they are at (as opposed to focusing on perfection). There will always be a need for change, and we will always strive to meet district goals, but we are becoming more comfortable with changing our practices based on formative assessment. We work with students who often struggle to self-regulate. Being involved in the inquiry has helped us see the need to change our practice to deal with these issues, and we are helping each other navigate these changes.

**New professional learning:** We explored team teaching in the Carrier classroom, a push-in early intervention model, and different ways to explore inquiry (more structured and guided). These were highly effective and will need to continue, as you cannot overcome low reading/language in one year. It is an ongoing process: "Learning involves patience and time and ultimately supports the well-being of the self..."

**Checking:** Students were excited about their learning, and we felt that the early intervention model was an attempt to balance and target traditional academic skills with the newer inquiry/play-based models. Seeing students come in at a lower level in reading, writing, math, attendance, and language is hard and using typical performance standards to gauge success is hard on self-esteem. Did we make a difference? Yes. In fact, we will continue next year. The *water* inquiry itself will continue, as the kindergarten level will create background knowledge for the older grades that focus on conservation and waterways in BC. It also creates a framework for developing conversational phrases in Carrier.

**Reflections/Advice:**

- Have a set of good First Nations books in every room
- Pick an inquiry that you will be comfortable doing over time with colleagues because nowadays the younger years need to create background knowledge through play in order to help students make connections to new learning later on
- Learning involves patience and time